Deer Seasons & Bag Limits

Antler Restriction Definition, Wildlife Management Units
Three points off the main beam on one side, including the main beam counted as one of the points ("Three Up"), excluding the brow tine (the point immediately above the antler burr): WMUs 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B & 2D
Three or more points to one antler: All other WMUs

Exceptions: In all WMUs, junior license holders, mentored youth hunters, disabled persons permit (to use a vehicle) holders and residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces—which includes the U.S. Coast Guard—two or more points to one antler, or with one antler three inches or more in length. **Senior License holders must abide by antler restrictions.**

A Legal Point: An antler projection of at least one inch in length from base to tip, including brow tines. Main beam shall be counted as a point regardless of length.

Antlerless Deer: A deer without antlers, or a deer with antlers both of which are less than three inches in length.

Protected Deer: A deer not defined as an antlered deer or an antlerless deer.

Limit: One legal antlered deer per license year. One antlerless deer with each valid WMU specific antlerless license.

Field Possession Limit: When multiple harvests of deer per day are authorized, only one deer at a time may be taken (except in Special Regulations Areas). Before attempting to take an additional deer, the first deer shall be lawfully tagged.

Archery: Antlered & Antlerless Statewide:
Sept. 29-Nov. 12 & Dec. 26-Jan. 12, 2013

Archery: Antlerless Only WMUs 2B, 5C & 5D:
Sept. 15-28 & Nov. 12-24

Archery: Antlered & Antlerless WMUs 2B, 5C & 5D:
Jan. 14-26, 2013

Special Antlerless Only - Firearms: Oct. 18-20
Only Junior and Senior License holders (Also, persons, residents and nonresidents, who have reached or will reach their 65th birthday in year of license application and either hold a valid adult license, or qualify for license and fee exemptions under section 2706), Disabled Person Permit (to use a vehicle) holders and Pennsylvania residents serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, including the U.S. Coast Guard. Arms and ammunition permitted during the **Regular Firearms Deer Seasons** can be used in this season.

Regular Firearms Deer Season: The designated period of time when deer may be hunted and taken by any person who possesses a General Hunting License or a General Hunting License and Antlerless License.

Antlered & Antlerless Deer: Nov. 26-Dec. 8
WMUs 1A, 1B, 2B, 3A, 3D, 4A, 4C, 5A, 5B, 5C & 5D

Antlered Only: Nov. 26-30
WMUs 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3B, 3C, 4B, 4D & 4E

Antlered & Antlerless: Dec. 1-8
WMUs 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3B, 3C, 4B, 4D & 4E

Antlerless - WMUs 2B, 5C & 5D: Dec. 26-Jan. 26, 2013
This is a firearms season, but WMU 5D and parts of 2B and 5C fall under Special Regulations Area restrictions. Only bows are permitted in Philadelphia County.

Antlerless - Muzzleloader: Oct. 13-20
Must have a muzzleloader license.

Flintlock Muzzleloader (Antlered or Antlerless) Statewide:
Dec. 26-Jan. 12, 2013, One antlered deer per hunting license year or one antlerless deer and an additional antlerless deer with each valid WMU specific antlerless license. Must have a muzzleloader license.

Flintlock Muzzleloader (Antlered & Antlerless): WMUs 2B, 5C & 5D - Dec. 26-Jan. 26, 2013

An antlerless deer license is valid only in the Wildlife Management Unit designated. The use or attempted use of an antlerless license in another WMU is a violation of the law. During the after Christmas flintlock season, an **unused buck tag** can be used to harvest one antlerless deer anywhere in the state. A WMU specific antlerless license is required for each additional antlerless deer harvested.

Regular Firearms Deer Season:

Antlered & Antlerless Deer: Nov. 26-Dec. 8
WMUs 1A, 1B, 2B, 3A, 3D, 4A, 4C, 5A, 5B, 5C & 5D

Antlered Only: Nov. 26-30
WMUs 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3B, 3C, 4B, 4D & 4E

Antlered & Antlerless: Dec. 1-8
WMUs 2A, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 3B, 3C, 4B, 4D & 4E

Regulations (Arms & Ammunition)

Firearms Deer Seasons: 1) Manually operated centerfire rifles, handguns and shotguns with all lead bullet or ball, or a bullet designed to expand on impact; 2) muzzleloading long guns of any type, 44 caliber or larger, or a muzzleloading handgun 50 caliber or larger; and 3) long, recurve or compound and crossbows with broadheads of cutting-edge design. Buckshot is illegal, except in Southeast Special Regulations Area.

Archery Seasons: Long, recurve, compound bows and crossbows with broadheads of cutting-edge design. An arrow and crossbow bolt must be equipped with a broadhead not more than three inches long and at least 7/8 inches wide, with at least two cutting edges on the same plane throughout the length of the cutting surface. Magnifying scopes and red dot sights can be used on crossbows. Persons hunting deer in the archery seasons may not possess a firearm, except those individuals who have a License to Carry Firearms permit, and then only those firearms authorized by the permit (most sporting arms are not authorized). Muzzleloading firearms can also be carried by bowhunters during any muzzleloading season, providing the hunter has an archery license and a muzzleloader license and meets the fluorescent orange requirements of the muzzleloader season.

Flintlock Muzzleloader Season: Flintlock ignition, single-barrel long gun, 44 caliber or larger, or 50 caliber or larger handgun, using single projectile ammunition. It is unlawful to use telescopic sights. Peep sights are permitted.

October Antlerless Muzzleloader Season: Any single-barrel muzzleloader long gun with flintlock, percussion or in-line ignition, 44 caliber or larger, or 50 caliber or larger handgun. Scope sights permitted.

Fluorescent Orange Requirements

Antlered & Antlerless: During the regular and special deer seasons, and any extensions of these seasons, all hunters must wear at least 250 square inches of fluorescent orange on the head, chest and back combined (example: orange cap and coat/vest visible 360 degrees). Camouflage fluorescent orange may satisfy this regulation if the total orange content is at least 250 square inches.

Archers: During the Sept. 15-28 archery season in WMUs 2B, 5C & 5D, and the first two weeks of early archery season, and during the late after-Christmas season, bowhunters are not required to wear fluorescent orange. When the early archery season overlaps with the October muzzleloader/special antlerless firearms season, archers are required to wear 250 square inches of fluorescent orange clothing while moving about or relocating. They may remove their orange clothing providing 100 square inches of fluorescent orange material is placed within 15 feet of their location and is visible 360 degrees when on stand. Finally, during overlap with fall turkey season, archery deer hunters (and bear hunters during the designated archery bear season) must wear a hat containing a minimum of 100 square inches of solid fluorescent orange material while moving about or relocating. The orange hat may be removed when the hunter is stationary, or on stand. See the Special Regulations Areas section for more details.

Muzzleloader Deer: During the late flintlock deer season muzzleloader hunters are not required to wear or display fluorescent orange. However, during the October antlerless muzzleloader deer season hunters are required to wear the same 250 square inches of fluorescent orange required of all big game season hunters. See the Special Regulation Areas section for more details.

Tagging, Reporting Requirements:
See tagging and reporting in the "Big Game Regulations" section.

Common Violations

A review of the most common violations of the Game & Wildlife Code during recent concurrent antlered/antlerless proved to be:

- Unlawful taking, possession and transportation of wildlife.
- Failure to properly tag big game. Deer must be tagged immediately after harvest and before the carcass is moved. Tag must be attached to the ear and remain attached until the animal is processed for consumption or prepared for mounting (Use a safety pin to attach tag to ear of deer you're planning to get mounted).
- Loaded firearms in vehicles not in motion.
- Hunt or take wildlife through the use of bait or enticement.

Other common violations included using a vehicle to locate game, commonly known as roadhunting, and not wearing or displaying the required amount of fluorescent orange safety material.

Antlerless deer licenses are required to hunt for antlerless deer during any deer season, except by flintlock hunters during the post-Christmas flintlock season, and only then if the hunter has not used his or her general license (buck) tag. An unused buck tag is valid for an antlerless deer anywhere in the state only during the flintlock deer season.

As a modest token to commemorate your first deer, bear, turkey or elk, the Game Commission has specially prepared a certificate suitable for framing that may be downloaded from the agency's website and then printed on your printer at home. Visit www.pgc.state.pa.us and click on "First Big Game Harvest" certificate under "Hunting" and then fill in the appropriate information.

State Parks & State Forests

Firearms and archery equipment may be uncased only in designated hunting areas during the seasons state recreation areas are open to hunting. In park areas not open to hunting, or during closed hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment must be kept in the owner's car, trailer or camp. Hunting, trapping, pursuing or intentionally disturbing wildlife in state parks is prohibited, except that hunting and trapping by licensed hunters and furtakers is permitted in designated areas in compliance with Game Commission regulations. Trapping may be permitted in areas not designated for hunting, but only upon written approval, which is granted only when effective wildlife administration of the area requires trapping. Dog training is permitted from the day following Labor Day through March 31 in designated hunting areas. Groundhog hunting is prohibited in state parks.

The Bureau of Forestry welcomes hunters and trappers to more than two million acres of state forests. Only small areas around occupied buildings are posted. Overnight camping is permitted only in areas designated by the district forester. Required permits are available from local forestry offices.

For more information about hunting on state parks, contact the Bureau of State Parks, 1-888-PA-PARKS, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us, or write State Parks, 8th Floor, P.O. Box 8551, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8551, or call your nearest state park. For more information or maps concerning hunting and recreational activities on state forests, contact the Bureau of Forestry, 6th Floor, P.O. Box 8552, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552. Phone: 717-783-7941, or your nearest forestry office.

Proper Care After Your Deer is Down

After a rewarding day in the field, the real work begins. Do not let improper handling of your harvested deer spoil your successful hunt. These tips will help get your deer from the field to your freezer.

- Field-dress deer as soon as possible to ensure rapid loss of body heat, prevent surface bacteria from growing, and maintain overall quality of the meat.
- To reduce your risk of exposure to disease, wear disposable gloves while handling animals. Using clean water, pre-moistened wipes, or alcohol wipes, clean your knife frequently between cuts to prevent bacterial contamination.

If gut shot:

- Field-dress as soon as possible to remove the entrails.
- Trim all visible feces or ingesta with a clean knife. Clean the knife regularly between cuts.
- If you need to wash the cavity to remove contamination, dry it thoroughly with a dry cloth or paper towels.
- Prop open the body cavity to circulate air.

After field-dressing:

- Clean, ventilate and dry the body cavity.
- Prop open the body cavity with a clean stick or branch. If possible, keep the opening up since heat rises.
- Remove all visible dirt, feces, hair, and bloodshot areas. Clean out entrail residue and drain excess blood.
- Wipe the inside of the body cavity with a dry cloth or paper towels.
- Upon arrival at home or camp, remove the hide and refrigerate the carcass (below 40°F) as soon as possible to prevent spoilage and maintain the quality of the meat.

A helpful guide to field-dress a deer is a pamphlet (Field Dressing Deer Pocket Guide) available from the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences at: Publications Distribution Center, Penn State University, 112 Agricultural Administration Bld., University Park, PA 16802-2602. 814-865-6713. To get a copy from the website (www.cas.psu.edu), type in "Field Dressing Deer Pocket Guide" in the search box.

How to Handle Mistake Kill

Any person who by accident or mistake kills any deer (an antlerless deer in mistake for a buck (antlered deer), or a buck in mistake for an antlerless deer, or a buck that does not meet required antler restrictions) shall immediately, but no later than 24 hours after the kill, deliver and surrender the entire carcass, less entrails, to any Game Commission officer in the county in which killed and make a written, sworn statement explaining when, where and how the accident or mistake occurred. Each licensed person who kills any deer shall immediately, and before moving the carcass, fully complete the proper tag in compliance with printed instructions and attach only the tag to the deer's ear. The deer will be turned in to the officer, restitution of $25 for each mistake deer shall be paid, and the hunter will be issued another tag to pursue another deer.

Failure to report and deliver a deer killed by accident or mistake is punishable with a fine up to $800 and license revocation.

For information on where to deliver a deer killed by accident or mistake, or with information about anyone who has failed to report a deer killed by accident or mistake, contact the Game Commission region office servicing the area (See the address page at the beginning of this Digest).